

# Children are people

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## **A Positive Approach**

Children have feelings, needs and expectations like everyone else. A young child depends almost entirely on her parents to meet these needs.

If you began a new job and no one told you the rules, you, too, would feel uncomfortable and insecure.

Young children, faced with new situations, need help to learn what is expected of them. Being a parent means being able to understand a child's emotional needs and learning to effectively handle them.

**To help your child feel secure, keep the following in mind:**

### **Praise and Encouragement**

Give praise for a job well done. A child feels encouraged to do as well, or better, the next time. Praise for being good is more effective than scolding. If it bothers you when your child slams a door, ignore the slams and praise her when she closes the door quietly.

When you comment on unwanted actions, do so in a positive way. For example, rather than "Don't slam the door, Jill," try: "Please close the door quietly, I prefer it that way."

Editor's Note: For simplicity 'she' is used in this pamphlet but the material applies equally to boys and girls.

## Be Consistent

Your child also needs to know what to expect. Rules, routines and consistent discipline will help her to feel secure.

**Rules:** It's important that she should understand the rules you set and that the rules work well for the entire family.

- Set rules which meet your desires but make sure they don't deny the needs of your child. Rather than "no skipping in the house," try "skipping in the basement only."
- Don't set too many rules. If you have a long list to remember it will make being consistent more difficult.
- Apply rules that your child can understand and is capable of following.
- As your child gets older, let her participate in setting rules and in deciding what will happen if a rule is broken. This will let her feel she has rights, and chances are that fewer rules will be broken.

**Set an Example:** Children imitate you and your behaviour will influence your child's behaviour. For example, if you tend to slam the door when angry she may learn to do the same. Be sure that your example shows how you wish your child to behave.

**Routines:** Help your child to feel secure by following a predictable program. Set times for meals, naps, baths and bedtime. This is important for young children, who need the security of knowing what to expect and what is expected of them.

**Discipline:** The key word in discipline is consistency. Make sure both parents agree on the rules and on what will happen if one is broken. Your child should understand what will happen if she breaks a rule or misbehaves, and you should handle conflicts or problems consistently. If you discipline her once for turning on the TV without permission, you shouldn't ignore her doing it a second time.



**Appropriate Punishment:** Punishment is to be used only to correct unwanted behaviour. It should never be used in a negative way. Don't send your child to bed because you're tired or because she was cranky. Reasons for discipline must be specific and she must understand the reasons.

Punishment should never be applied to hurt, either physically or emotionally. It's a teaching tool, should be used consistently and *only* when necessary.

Apply discipline immediately. Don't use the threat of "Wait until Daddy gets home." Your child should understand why she is being punished and the connection with her unwanted behaviour should be made clear.

Make sure that discipline is fair. Don't deny your child her dinner because she turned on the TV without permission. If she persists in ignoring your request, you might try restricting her from watching TV for the afternoon.

Be sure your child understands what kind of behaviour you expect. Once the discipline has been applied, forgive and forget. Your child needs to know that you still love her and that you are not going to hold her misbehaviour against her.

Some forms of punishment are:

- Removal of a treat or privilege
- Confinement to a room
- Restriction of an activity
- Verbal disapproval
- Spanking

**Confinement to her Room:** Sometimes you or your child will be so upset that a *short* confinement to her room may be best. This may happen if the child is having a temper tantrum or is doing something that makes you very angry.

Your child should always understand why she is being confined. For example, if she is having a tantrum you may tell her "If you don't settle down you'll have to go to your room." or if she's making a lot of noise when you've had enough you might say "If you don't stop banging you'll have to go to your room."

It works best if you leave your child alone for only a short time. As soon as she is settled or you are calm, move in, comfort her and explain what you expect in the future.

**Spanking:** Many parents resort to spanking when other forms of discipline fail to settle their child, or to correct a misbehaviour. However, spanking is generally *not* effective in producing a self-disciplined child. Spanking should *not* be used routinely to discipline misbehaviour.

The following points tell what is known about spanking and may be helpful if you are wondering about its effects.

- Spanking is bad modelling. It teaches a child to hit others.
- It can lead to a poor self-image.
- Frequent spanking may teach your child to learn ways of avoiding 'getting caught.'
- It tends to lose its effectiveness when used too often, and may make her feel bad and angry towards you.
- It can be used *sparingly* to show disapproval but should never be used to hurt your child or to "make her pay" for something she has done. It is generally used as a last resort and this usually shows that the parent is frustrated.
- If a parent uses spanking too often it indicates that he or she has lost control of the situation. This may show the child that the parent cannot cope with the problem, and this in turn can make the child frightened and insecure.

## **The Gift of Love**

Young children need constant reassurance that you love them. Love is the greatest gift you can give your child.

You can show your love by:

- Saying "I love you"
- Kissing, hugging and touching
- Talking or playing together
- Going places, doing things together
- Showing an interest in her activities
- Listening carefully
- Doing something special, perhaps a treat
- Giving each child some of your individual time.



## Good Feelings

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When a child knows she is loved, she will develop good feelings and self-confidence. Constant love reassures a child. With a good self-image, she'll be willing to try new things and to think for herself.

Help your child to develop a good self-image by:

- Recognizing her as an individual with her own wants and needs.
- Encouraging individual thinking. Allow her to pursue her own interests whenever possible and don't compare her efforts with another child's.
- Allowing her to begin making simple choices at an early age.
- Respecting her views and showing understanding and fairness when differences occur.
- Encouraging her to solve her own problems by thinking out solutions. Support her with suggestions if she asks for help.
- Giving her more responsibility as she grows older and can handle it. Teach independence.
- Setting an example. The way you handle relationships and situations will guide her.
- Working out problems together. Allow her to participate in decision-making whenever possible.

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